

OPS press conference readout

From: "Williams, Caroline" <caroline.williams@qpc-cpr.gc.ca>
To: "Astravas, Zita" <zita.astravas@qpc-cpr.gc.ca>, "Rettig, Christina" <christina.rettig@qpc-cpr.gc.ca>, "Barrack, Radey" <radey.barrack@qpc-cpr.gc.ca>, "Cullinan, Annie" <annie.cullinan@qpc-cpr.gc.ca>
Cc: "Tooley, Duncan" <duncan.tooley@qpc-cpr.gc.ca>
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OPS Presser February 17 2022

Interim Chief Bell for OPS, Deputy Commissioner Chris Harkins of OPP, Deputy Commissioner Mike Duheme of RCMP (Federal Policing)

Steve Bell

- * Officers from OPS, OPP, RCMP, and numerous other police agencies in ON and QC are now here in Ottawa.
- * Have been bolstering our resources, developing clear plans, and preparing to take action.
- * **Action is imminent.**
- * Have been working to inform protestors over last few days of consequences of disobeying rules
- * Want to bring this demonstration to an end peacefully and safely
- * Prepared to deploy lawful techniques to remove unlawful protestors from our streets.
- * To people of downtown core: your safety is our priority.
- * Recognize pain and suffering caused. We are committing to bringing your streets back to normal.
- * Police are here to care for your community and keep you safe.
- * Installing barriers and fencing throughout area
- * We have introduced a secured area – Bronson Ave to the Canal, Queensway to Parliament Hill
- * Those seeking entry to secured area for unlawful reasons will not be able to enter
- * Community not used to these measures we recognize – will only be in place
- * Taking every step to minimize impact on residents
- * If you have lawful reason to be there, minimal impacts on your access
- * Individuals free to move about once past checkpoints
- * To those engaged in the unlawful protest – if you wish to leave on your own terms, now is the time to do it.

Q: Are Ottawa police asking businesses near the red zone to stay closed for an extended period of time?

A: We have introduced this secured area which people are free to come and go from if they are there for **lawful** purposes. Area just restricted for those who are looking to engage in unlawful activity.

Officers are in area on foot and in vehicles to ensure safety and security of neighbourhoods.

Q: What measures are being considered if protestors do not comply?

A: Have been clear since beginning – it's time to go. We have engaged with protestors to attempt to persuade, negotiate. Will continue to do so, but we have a deliberate plan of action to take back our streets and bring things back to normal.

Q: When do you plan to intervene for kids?

A: One of our key concerns when planning is the # of children still inside. Working with Children's Aid Society to find safest ways to remove children prior to police action. All of our planning has been very considerate of people within zone, including children.

Q: Will you be removing children first before conducting enforcement?

A: All of our planning has been deliberate to protect children and everyone within zone.

Q: This has been bungled since the start. Why should people believe that this time will be different?

A: Look outside at presence we have right now. Unprecedented steps of provincial, federal laws, resources amassed to execute plan. Have seen a much increased presence of officers within last day and a half. That is to indicate we are at the end of this protests.

Q: Looking outside, people with bouncy castles, hot tubs to Wellington. Can you assure the residents of this city that this will no longer happen? That the parties will end this week?

A: That's what we're here to say today. Absolutely committed to bringing this to an end, have plan and resources to do so.

Q: Talking about setting up checkpoints, how are these going to work? What's going to stop people from lying?

A: Over 100 checkpoints established. Officers continue to be informed of lawful reasons to stop and challenge, and what is considered a lawful reason to be there.

Q: Difficulty of dealing with children – protestors are saying it's totally safe to have kids there. How are you going to deal with potentially separating families?

A: We are going to continue to work with Children's Aid Society, their safety and wellbeing is our utmost priority.

Q: Do you have a goal of how many vehicles you want to remove over weekend?

A: Not setting goals, continuing to have dialogues and will continue to increase our actions until area secured and returned to citizens of Ottawa.

Q: Have you secured heavy tow capacity?

A: We continue to work on our plans, our plans have been developed. Don't see any issues to remove heavy vehicles at this point.

Q: How much time do you think this will take? Do you expect reinforcements to come back on weekend?

A: Secure zone thanks to federal security act, designed to prevent people coming back in for unlawful reasons. This weekend will look very different than last 3.

Q: People with offices, kids going to school. Should they stay away?

A: Understand concerns from community. Working with school boards and other groups to identify concerns. Issuing media advisories to keep public informed.

Q: How critical emergency act powers are to your plans?

A: We have seen a growing frustration within community, provincial govt, fed govt, about situation. Have seen growth in authorities to deal with this unprecedented situation. All of these new supports have directly and actively contributed to our ability to address this situation and say we can bring it to an end.

Q: Encampments – what assurances can you offer that these protestors will not simply relocate into other parts of Ottawa, into other peoples' communities?

A: Understand concerns. Working with RCMP, OPP, partners to ensure we have ability to demobilize and prevent this from simply being displaced somewhere else. We don't want this to just be displaced somewhere else.

Q: Still negotiating and speaking with vehicle owners – are you past point of no return for trucks to leave peacefully?

A: Never past that point. We still will facilitate peaceful departures. We will never stop trying to get people to leave our streets, that's what we want them to do. Just know that there is a deliberate plan to end this, but it can be ended by people getting in their vehicles and going home.

Q: Are you negotiating with organizers?

A: We continue to negotiate with individuals and representatives from different groups. It is absolutely everyone's desire to have this brought to an end peacefully. But demonstrators need to know we have commitment, we have a plan, needs to end.

Q: Truckers not physically leaving trucks – how do you plan to deal with that?

A: Not in a position to give up operational issues we've discussed. We have taken into account and planned for many different eventualities.

Q: Still lots of people just walking on Wellington, showing your support. What is your plan to deal with them?

A: Our message has been pretty consistent, and so has community's message. Do not come to our downtown core. We will not be allowing people to come downtown